

# Baltic Fund News

Winter 1998

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## A Finno-Ugric Fall Quarter

*Guest lectures by two Estonian scholars were among the highlights of Fall Quarter 1997 at the University of Washington.*

### **Finno-Ugric Languages in Russia**

Professor Harri Mürk, head of the Estonian language program at the University of Toronto, author of **A handbook of Estonian** (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1997), and President of the Finno-Ugric Studies Association of Canada, gave a lecture on November 20, titled "Language and Language Retention among the Eastern Finno-Ugrians." Mürk, who received his Ph.D. from Indiana University, specializes in Finno-Ugric linguistics and has travelled extensively in North Europe and Russia to study Finnish, Hungarian, Mari, Mordvin and other languages which are historically related to Estonian.

In his lecture, Dr. Mürk spoke about his fieldwork among the Finno-Ugric populations in the Russian Federation. These cultures are remnants of the original aboriginal populations of northwestern Eurasia. Their current struggle to retain their distinctive languages and cultures offers many insights into a variety of problems faced by small minority populations around the world. Their experience is a litmus test for the development of democracy and pluralistic society in the Russian Federation.

### **Estonian Folk Legends**

On November 26, Mare Kõiva gave a guest lecture in a class on Folk Narrative. Kõiva is director of the folk belief research group at the Folklore Department of the Estonian Language Institute in Tartu, Estonia. She is also a founder of the Baltic Institute of Folklore. In her lecture, Kõiva described the Estonian legend traditions, from stories which were told in preindustrial communities about nature spirits, to the urban legends which circulated under Soviet rule.

### **Baltic Studies on the Internet**

Mare Kõiva was visiting the United States thanks to travel grants from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the University of Washington, and Indiana University.

She is directing an ambitious project to make the Estonian Folklore Archive accessible on the Internet, and visited folklore collections in Washington and

Indiana to discuss future collaboration on this project. (Visit the homepage created by Kõiva and the Estonian folklorists at <http://haldjas.folklore.ee>.) She discussed technological matters in a meeting at the UW Center for Advanced Research and Technology in the Arts and Humanities (CARTAH). A group of faculty and students at the University of Washington has begun work on a Baltic Cultures homepage, which will complement the materials available in Estonia. The UW Baltic Cultures homepage, scheduled for launching in Spring of 1998, aims to serve as an English-language public information resources for persons interested in Baltic peoples and the treasures of their cultures.

### **Finno-Ugric Identity Today**

On November 22, both of the Estonian visitors presented their research at the Seattle conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, in a panel organized together with three University of Washington faculty members. Titled "Finno-Ugric Identity Today," the panel was one of the Baltic Studies highlights at the conference. Harri Mürk introduced the session with an overview of Finno-Ugric peoples and languages. Thomas DuBois (UW Department of Scandinavian Studies) gave a provocative historical survey of the development of Finno-Ugric studies in Finland, titled "Finno-Ugric Identity: Is it, Was it, Will it Be?" Mare Kõiva spoke about "Kalevipoeg: The Estonian National Hero Today," and Guntis Smidchens (UW Department of Scandinavian Studies) spoke about "Kaupo: Livonian National Hero or Traitor?" James West (Director, UW Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies) led a discussion and critique of the papers, stressing the importance of studying transformations in modern-day national traditions. A lively audience discussion followed the presentations, including questions and comments by the Baltic historians Andrejs Plakans (Iowa State University) and Toivo Raun (Indiana University).

Participants at these lectures agreed that international collaborative research and communication are highly beneficial to all. Visiting scholars such as Harri Mürk and Mare Kõiva help update our knowledge about Estonian and Finno-Ugric studies, and stimulate the growth of new ideas and research at the University of Washington.

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### **Visit the Department of Scandinavian Studies through the Internet!**

For updated information, visit our homepage:

<http://depts.washington.edu/scand/>

Questions about the Baltic Studies Program and the Baltic Program Endowment may be sent to:

University of Washington  
Baltic Studies Program  
Box 353420

Seattle WA 98195-3420  
E-mail: [uwscand@u.washington.edu](mailto:uwscand@u.washington.edu)

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### Upcoming Events

**February 12-13:** Two lectures by Professor **Violeta Kelertas** (Endowed Chair of Lithuanian Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago). Publication by Kelertas include **Come Into My Time: Lithuania in Prose Fiction, 1970-1990** (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1992). She will speak about "Ricardas Gavelis and Baltic Postcolonial Literature" at 7:00 pm on Thursday Evening, February 12, in Thomson Hall 134. On Friday, February 13, at 12:20 in Chemistry Library 101, her lecture will be "Recent Lithuanian Fiction."

**March 6:** Celebration marking a major gift to the University of Washington Baltic Studies Program Endowment, 7:00 pm in Kane Hall 130 and the Walker Ames Room. The evening will feature a performance of Latvian songs by the **University of Washington Chorale** and a keynote speech by a founder of the Baltic Studies Program, Professor **Thomas DuBois**. All friends of the Baltic Studies Program are invited. Please call the Department of Scandinavian Studies, (206)543-0645, to let us know that you are coming.

**May 28-29:** Lectures by Professor **David G. Kirby** (School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London). Kirby is author of numerous books and articles about Baltic and Scandinavian History, including **Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World 1492-1772** (London: Longman, 1990) and **The Baltic World 1772-1993: Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change** (London: Longman, 1995). Times and places for Kirby's lectures will be announced. For information, call the Department of Scandinavian Studies.

**June 19-August 14:** Fifth Annual **Baltic Studies Summer Institute** at Indiana University. BALSSI, established by the University of Washington in 1994, will be hosted this year by Indiana University. The Institute is financed by a consortium of six American universities. This summer's courses include Intensive First-Year Instruction in Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian, as well as courses taught in English about Baltic Culture and Baltic History. Scholarships may be available for outstanding students. For information, write to Professor Toivo Raun, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Goodbody Hall 157, Indiana University, Bloomington IN 47405.  
Email: [raunt@indiana.edu](mailto:raunt@indiana.edu)

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### Baltic Courses at the University of Washington, Winter Quarter 1998

During the Winter Quarter (January 5 to March 20, 1998), instruction continues in first-year Latvian. Three additional courses taught in English include Baltic content.

"Baltic Cultures" (SCAND 345/SIS RE 345) is taught by Guntis Smidchens. The course is taught in English and requires no knowledge of Baltic languages. Students are reading masterpieces of Estonian and Latvian literature, and exploring Baltic art, music and film.

Christine Ingebritsen is teaching "Scandinavia in World Affairs" (SCAND/POLSCI 326). Ingebritsen points out, "Scandinavia in World Affairs surveys the most important foreign policy issues and problems facing the five northern European states since the Second World War. One of the ways in which contemporary Scandinavia is changing is expanding the concept of region to include the Baltics. Foreign direct investment, defense policy advising, environmental clean-up, and informal connections are important in the new Scan-Baltic relationship."

In a third course, "Scandinavian Women Writers" (SCAND 490), taught by Lotta Gavel-Adams, students are reading books by Karen Blixen and Selma Lagerlöf alongside those of Baltic authors Agate Nesaule and Birute Baltrusaityte.

In Spring Quarter 1998 (March 30 to June 12), a new course will be taught in the Department of Scandinavian Studies: SCAND 344, "The Baltic States and Scandinavia," will survey the history of the Baltic States from the Viking Age to the present, with particular attention to Baltic-Scandinavian contacts. The class will meet Monday through Thursday, 12:30-1:20 in Balmer Hall 211.

Another history course will also include the Baltic region. SCAND 380, "History of Scandinavia to 1702," will devote a substantial section to the Swedish Empire. In the 17th century, Sweden ruled all of today's Estonia, Northern Latvia, and the city of Riga, leaving a legacy of law, education, and egalitarian politics in Latvian and Estonian history for centuries after Swedish rule.

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### **Fulbright Exchange in Estonia:**

#### **A Letter from Tartu**

*Robert Smurr, a doctoral student in the University of Washington History Department, is living in Tartu, Estonia during the 1997-1998 academic year. He began studying Estonian in the UW Baltic Studies Program in 1995, and was awarded a Fulbright Grant to do archival and oral history research. In December, he wrote this brief report on life in Tartu.*

I arrived in Tartu at the beginning of October, when the leaves had already washed the town in hues of orange and yellow rarely seen in Seattle. My late arrival (the semester started a month earlier, and most students arrived by mid-August) meant that not only did I

miss the last few days of a warm and long summer, but that my classes were already in full swing. Not to worry, however, for the language training I received over the previous few years at the University of Washington let me slip into courses late with little transitional problems, a feat which would have been impossible without my previous coursework. Although my goal here is to carry out research for my Ph.D. dissertation (an environmental history of Estonia), I decided to enroll in an intensive language course for the first few months in order to facilitate faster reading skills. Fortunately, Tartu is already used to dealing with foreigners who want to study Estonian, so there are currently several courses from which to choose.

The international character of Tartu was quite a surprise for me. In my class are two other Americans, a Romanian, a Swede, and women from England, Lithuania and Trinidad. The university's offer of free tuition to many international students seems to be a great draw, for I have met others (outside of my class) from Sri Lanka, Iraq, South Korea, etc. Most are taking at least some Estonian language courses, although it is possible to get by in the university with only English (at least for the first two years of study). I hear Russian occasionally around town and campus, but not nearly as frequently as I had expected, and certainly not nearly as frequently in Tallinn. The few Russians I have met so far spoke very little Estonian, and this despite their youth. Nevertheless, few of them seem troubled by the possible barriers their lack of initiative may pose. When I ask Estonians about the troubles these Russian speakers might face in the future, they mention that they will probably have difficulties in the workplace. Perhaps we should send a shipload of them to the Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington!

*Robert Smurr*

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### **Valdas Adamkus - President of Lithuania**

As the results of the Lithuanian elections came in early in 1998, faculty and students in the Baltic Studies Program were excited to hear that Valdas Adamkus had won the election and was now President of Lithuania.

In May of 1995, Adamkus, who at the time was serving as Regional Administrator for the US Environmental Protection Agency, gave a keynote lecture at the University of Washington's Symposium on Environmental Problems of the Baltic Sea. He outlined the historical legacy of the Soviet Union, which did not take environmental considerations into account, and he identified key problems. The Baltic Sea is essentially a closed ecosystem in which it takes about twenty five years for natural currents to fully exchange

water with the North Sea, far too slow to flush out growing amounts of military, municipal and agricultural pollution. The 1995 symposium brought University of Washington faculty and students together with specialists from the United States and Europe, and the World Bank, to discuss steps to be taken toward solutions.

In a recent interview with the Chicago Tribune, Adamkus was asked, "How can Americans help Lithuania?" He answered, "Through a closer relationship with the people here." We at the University of Washington hope to contribute to this goal. As our Baltic Studies Program's foundations gradually grow stronger, its ties to Lithuania and the Baltic states are deepening. International conferences such as the Baltic Sea symposium in 1995 and the Conference on NATO Enlargement and the Baltic Region in 1997, as well as other lectures at the UW by Baltic political and academic leaders have shown our faculty and students that we have much to gain from meetings with our Baltic colleagues. Growing book exchange programs with Baltic libraries are helping make the University of Washington's Library a substantial resource center for Baltic Studies in the United States. Language courses are helping train a new generation of American scholars in Baltic Studies. The future holds endless possibilities!



BALTI ASSAMBLEE  
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BALTIJOS ASAMBLEJA

To Prof. Thomas Dubois  
Department of Scandinavian Studies  
University of Washington  
fax 206 685 9173

Vilnius, 6 May, 1997

Dear Mr. Dubois,

After the Baltic Assembly Presidium Meeting, I want to take my first opportunity to inform you briefly, that the Baltic Studies Program was discussed at the Meeting and given a very positive evaluation. Some new proposals for the future co-operation were introduced, which, might be of interest to you. Our opinion is, that the Baltic Assembly could initiate a kind of technical assistance (books, videotapes, etc.,) to the Scandinavian Studies Department, in case you find it useful. We would appreciate a letter from you, specifying your particular interests.

The Presidium of the Baltic Assembly is also positive about the possibility to invite representatives of the Baltic Studies Program to some of the events, organized by the Baltic Assembly.

Yours cordially,

*Mecys Laurinkus*  
Chairman of the Presidium

June 11, 1997  
Riga

In Reply to the Memorandum from:

Scandinavian Department, University of Washington in  
Seattle,  
Andris Rcgainis on behalf of Latvian Community,  
Irena Blekys on behalf of Lithuanian Community,  
and Kalev Sepp on behalf of Estonian Society

CC: Mr. Mecys Laurinkus, Board Chair of the Baltic Assembly

This is in appreciation of your endeavors to expand studies and understanding of the cultures, languages and societies of independent Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and maintain a permanent program in Baltic Studies at the University of Washington. We are pleased to answer your call for cooperation in sustaining educational efforts, community and academia ties, and links between Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian-Americans with countries of their ancestors.

On behalf of the University of Tartu, University of Latvia, and Vilnius University, we recognize the importance of assuring security and fostering economic, social, and cultural development of our respective countries while bringing together willingness and interest of our partners in the US to contribute to the process. We underscore the significance of joining our efforts and making those linkages mutually beneficial in the ways university associations and communities abroad choose to advance.

We welcome your goal to make the Program in the Baltic Studies at the University of Washington a permanent establishment and to further develop the Baltic Studies Summer Institute, created and sponsored by five universities in the framework of an intercollegiate consortium. Our respective higher education institutions in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are interested to enter into agreement with American partners to promote

high quality studies of languages, history, political and economical development of our countries, and learn from American experience of building democratic society and free market economy.

On behalf of the University of Tartu, University of Latvia, and Vilnius University, we are ready to explore the opportunities to instigate student and faculty exchange, create joint academic programs including summer courses open not only for academic community, but also to the general public, and participate in research projects with the University of Washington in Seattle. To that end, we would seek financial support from Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Governments, and jointly approach grant giving agencies both in the US and locally.

Dr. Rolandas Pavilionis  
Rector  
Vilnius University

Prof. Peter Tulviste  
Rector  
University of Tartu

Prof. Juris Zakis  
Rector  
University of Latvia

## **In Memoriam Kenneth Coulter**

Kenneth Brewster Coulter, Lithuanian language student at the University of Washington's 1994 Baltic Studies Summer Institute, passed away on July 8, 1996. He was born on September 30, 1927, in Mineola, New York. He is survived by Marguerite Coulter.

In October of 1997, Marguerite visited the Scandinavian Department as Ken had done from time to time in the past, sharing memories about their happy life over a cup of coffee in the Burke Museum Cafe. She brought along a gift of about 200 linguistics



books and dictionaries from Ken's extensive library, and news that Kenneth had left a bequest of \$15,000 to the Baltic Studies Program Endowment at the University of Washington.

Kenneth's mother, a teacher of the Latin language, inspired him in his pursuit of languages. He began with Latin, then went on to learn many others. His travels brought him to the far corners of the world. In his youth, a packet of family letters written in German led him to the Goethe language school in Germany,



where he studied while tracking down relatives in Austria. He told stories of his military service in the Philippines, about his job as an English teacher in Norway, and about visits to St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Derbent, Dagestan, which is a sister city to his hometown of Yakima, Washington.

Kenneth graduated from Princeton University with a degree in History, then received a masters in Law from George Washington university in Washington, DC. He served in the Russian division of the National Security Agency for ten years, then moved to the Northwest to work at the Boeing Company. He enrolled in the University of Washington Graduate School, and received an M.A. from the Linguistics Department in 1968. He was a passionate scholar of languages, fascinated by the intricacies of grammar and historical linguistics. In 1994, when the University of Washington founded the Baltic Studies Summer Institute, Kenneth enrolled in the Intensive Lithuanian course, falling in love with the archaic grammatical patterns that he found. That same year, he travelled to Lithuania. A week passed quickly with visits to Trakai Castle, Vilnius Old Town, and a happy meeting with a Lithuanian doctor whom he had befriended in the USA. After returning to Seattle, he visited the University of Washington, brimming with stories about Lithuanian hospitality and carrying a gift of the newest Lithuanian textbooks and tapes that he had found.

As a scholar of languages, Kenneth was a model to us all. His linguistics library features classic authors such as Mencken, Sapir, Bloomfield, Chomsky and Townsend, as well as dictionaries and grammars of Sanskrit, Homeric Greek, Russian, German, Ukrainian, Serbo-Croatian, Lithuanian, Georgian, Hawaiian, Esperanto, and many other languages, challenging us also to pursue broad and deep knowledge in the scholarly field we love. Kenneth will be remembered fondly at the University of Washington, as a student, colleague and friend.

*Guntis Smidchens*

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## **Fundraising News**

### **Coming on October 17: 1998 Baltic Auction**

Over 350 people attended the "Follow the Amber Road" auction in April 1997, raising \$30,000 for the University of Washington's Baltic Studies Program Endowment Fund. Lucky bidders went home with Caribbean cruise tickets, a basketball autographed by the Portland Trailblazers, amber jewelry, computer games, a hand-carved Baltic nativity scene, and use of a condominium at Whistler. The auction committee is procuring items for the 1998 auction. If you wish to donate an item, please call the Scandinavian Department, 206-543-0645, for a procurement form and instructions.

The 1998 goal is to raise \$50,000 for the Baltic Studies Program Endowment Fund, to support the University of Washington's growing program in Baltic languages, history and culture. We hope that you will join us for an evening of

fun in support of Baltic Studies at the University of Washington.

*Amanda Floan, Auction Chair*

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Send comments or questions to: [uwscand@u.washington.edu](mailto:uwscand@u.washington.edu)